

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: July 14, 2010

FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner

ADDRESS: 50 F Street NW

APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk café for 5 tables and 15 seats

Site Information

Zone: HR/C-3-C

Historic District: No

CFA: No

Neighborhood Character: Downtown commercial district

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 24, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Café Phillips. In November 2008, the Public Space Committee approved with conditions a sidewalk cafe at 927 F Street NW.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy T-2.4.4: Sidewalk Obstructions

Locate sidewalk cafes and other intrusions into the sidewalk so that they do not present impediments to safe and efficient pedestrian passage. Maintain sidewalk surfaces and elevations so that disabled or elderly pedestrians can safely use them. 410.8

Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space

Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the “activation” of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.

Policy UD-3.10: Sidewalk Cafes

Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The property is located Downtown on F Street, NW, between New Jersey Avenue and North Capitol Street. It is located in an area zoned HR/C-3-C. There is a high level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial.

The sidewalk where the proposed café is located is along F Street and 35 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are 4 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and

other street furniture. This leaves 31 feet to accommodate for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 5 tables and 15 seats in an area that is 127.5 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 7'-6". This leaves 23'-6" of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 4 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk cafe.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 127.5 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 9 seats; the application is for 15 seats.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. There is a very wide sidewalk with plenty of room for the café to expand in order to allow for the proposed number of seats.

As a result of the above recommendations, the sidewalk café square footage should be increased to accommodate the proposed seating. The café needs to be increased from extending only 7'-6" to 14' into the sidewalk, which will provide 14 feet of adjacent clear pedestrian path. The increased dimensions for the café are 14 feet x 17 feet, which results in a new square footage of 238 for the café area that will allow for a maximum of 16 seats.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the conditions that the square footage of the café be increased to at least 238, which allows for a maximum of 16 seats.